

## **Tell us a little about yourself and your current role?**

I manage a 25-bed residential care home in Quarriers Village, Bridge of Weir, outside Inverclyde. We have 18 people with different stages of dementia living at Campbell Snowdon.

I support the staff and residents, and care for residents' families too - especially families whose relative can no longer recognise family members or is unable to talk to them. I help families to understand dementia and the effect it has on their loved ones.

## **How would you describe your experience of the Dementia Champions programme?**

I really enjoyed the programme. I had the opportunity to work in partnership with people in the NHS. I gained information and knowledge from people working in other parts of health, social care and the public sector. We had good discussions and sharing of knowledge and best practice. We also highlighted concerns about things lacking in the care sector, such as post-diagnosis support.

The programme materials were very good. The lecturers were knowledgeable and willing to help with problems. One of the topics we covered was how to positively impact a person's experience of care. Suggestions included music therapy and Namaste care (engaging people with advanced dementia through sensory input, comfort and pleasure).

I came away from the programme with ideas about things that might work well depending on the care environment.

## **What have been the most positive aspects of the programme for you?**

For me it was the ability to take the learning back to the care home and look at where we could improve and do things differently. It was also helpful to discuss what I had learned with the staff and encourage them in turn to discuss different ways to improve the care of people with dementia in a care home setting.

We looked at how staff could get more involved in activities: such as sitting with a resident and reminiscing with them; not so much tasks, but rather a focus on the person-centred aspects of care.

We also looked at palliative care and anticipatory care planning to support people with dementia make choices. We should be promoting those choices. I see that as the duty of the care home and the care home sector in general - to make sure that every person has a voice.

The changes we are considering are ongoing and we are continually looking for other ways to improve our service.

## **What are your plans for taking forward learning from the programme or what changes have you brought about in your practice or working environment?**

Now I'm looking to make improvements on an annual basis and these include: checking that everything is in place for all our residents; finding new activities and experiences they can enjoy with family members and volunteers.

Two examples are:

1. An annual dementia audit – to ensure that we are meeting the individual needs of our residents. Each resident is living with dementia at a different stage, while some residents are not living with dementia. Our care home needs to support all of them.
2. Purchasing a trishaw, (a light, three-wheeled vehicle with pedals and two passenger seats at the front), to make it easier for our residents to get out and about in the community. The trishaw would be pedalled by a volunteer. This would support our initiative to introduce volunteers from the local community into a care home environment and help bring the community together with residents of Campbell Snowdon. The trishaw would also allow residents to experience what it was like to be on a bike again and family members could volunteer to pedal the bike.

## **What do you consider to be your key successes so far?**

To date my key successes have been the dementia audit and the introduction of more activities and therapies to improve the experience of care.

### **Annual dementia audit**

People living with dementia at Campbell Snowdon are all at different stages and have different needs. The audit is a formal way to identify changes and implement solutions. An example might be visual impairment or ongoing deterioration of eyesight. Remedies can include improved signage in the person's living environment in the care home and in the dining room and offering assisted technology such as a talking clock.

### **Activities and therapies to enhance experience of care**

My team and I do our best to help residents access other opportunities at the care home, in the local village and in the surrounding countryside. One resident has taken up horse riding at 84 years of age and, thanks to the loan of a speedboat, our residents can enjoy trips on Loch Winnoch.

I've applied to Scotmid for a community grant in conjunction with Cycling without Age. If successful, the intention would be to introduce these bikes to other parts of Quarriers Village and offer help in other communities. A care home in Falkirk is already using them.

We keep ducks, chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs and encourage our residents to interact with the animals and help look after them. We have also arranged a visit to the care home by Therapy Ponies Scotland. A mini Shetland pony came to the home and the residents were able to pat it and it was a great way to help them communicate, show affection and emotion.

We have also introduced music therapy and, in particular, Playlist for Life, as a way of bringing staff, families and loved ones with dementia closer together.